

Walking Along the Ilissos River: Topographical Remarks about an Athenian District

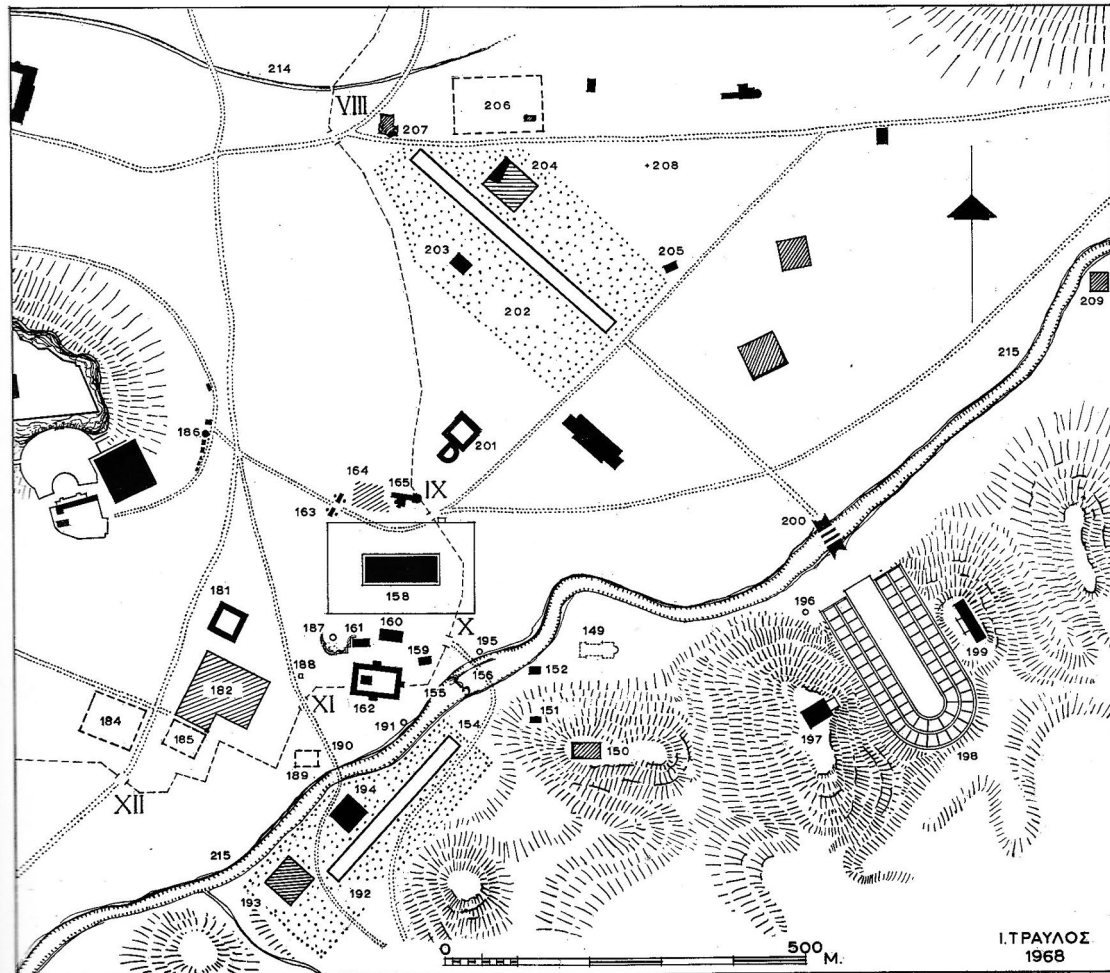
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The Ilissos valley under the plateau of Olympieion has always been one of the most fascinating places in Athens because of the several cults and myths mentioned in ancient literature and archaeological data, which confirm this most of the time (fig. 1).¹ The present study begun from two main questions: How did the areas around the Ilissos river change during time and how much did the abundance or scarcity of water influenced those changing processes. The Ilissos valley has been inhabited from the proto-Helladic to the Byzantine period, going through many changes of use.²

Starting as a necropolis area, it became one of the most important sacral places during the late Archaic period.³ In the middle of 5th century BC, the area came through its first monumental phase, when the peripteral temple of Apollo in Doric order was built, as testified by archaeological data and epigraphic evidence on pottery (graffiti) found there⁴. Besides the sacral purpose of the area, the water affordability became the main productive resource for the development of workshops along the river. An inscription not found *in situ*, in the modern quarter of Plaka, and coming not so far away from the riverbanks, testifies a leather workshop nearby the Ilissos river around the second half of 5th century BC.⁵ Workshops along watercourses should have existed since the Classical period in Athens, as some evidence along the Eridanos river and the ancient Agora testify.⁶ In the Hellenistic period, the Ilissos valley became a peripheral residential district⁷ until Roman times when Emperor Hadrian renewed the area and readdressed it to a sacral value. In the Byzantine time, however, the area developed into an operating centre of metallurgy and oil production supplying the entire city.⁸

Thanks to the Ephorate of Antiquities and the Archeologiki Etaireia of Athens, I had the possibility to study the excavation notebooks and the drawings realised by I. Threpsiadis and I. Travlos at the Ilissos valley between 1960 and 1967.⁹ Therefore, I was able to explore the changes of the area's uses and topography.¹⁰ The participation at the AIAC Congress in Bonn was fruitful due to the feedback that my paper received on the issues of Landscape Archaeology and productivity along rivers and water basins.

In any case, my research on the Ilissos valley is not complete; reading the documentation of the old excavation is only the first step. Consecutively, it requires to analyse the findings in the whole and to proceed to new surveys, in order to delineate the evolution of the area during the time clearer.



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| 150. Heiligtum des Poseidon
Helikonios | 182. Heiligtum des Kodros | 197. Tempel der Tyche |
| 151. Artemis Agrotera | 184. Dionysion <i>ἐν Αἰγυαίς</i> | 198. Stadion |
| 152. Metroon in Agrai | 185. Taureas-Palästra | 199. Grabbau des Herodes Atticus |
| 154. Relief des Pan | 186. Lysikrates-Denkmal | 200. Brücke aus römischer Zeit |
| 155. Kallirrhoe | 187. Heiligtum der Olympischen Ge | 201. Römisches Gebäude mit halb-
kreisförmiger Halle |
| 156. Ilissos-Übergang | 188. Amazonenstele | 202. Lykeion |
| 158. Olympieion | 189. Pythion | 203. Lykeion-Bad |
| 159. Kronos und Rhea | 190. Aphrodite in den Gärten | 204. Gymnasium |
| 160. Apollon Delphinios | 191. Altar der Ilissischen Musen | 205. Tempelfundamente |
| 161. Gerichtsstätte am Delphinion | 192. Kynosarges | 206. Gärten des Theophrast |
| 162. Panhellenion | 193. Gymnasium | 207. Bad des Diochares |
| 163. Hadriansbogen | 194. Gymnasium | 208. Grab des Nisos |
| 164. Häuser | 195. Heiligtum des Boreas | 209. Herakles Pankrates |
| 165. Römisches Bad I | 196. Heiligtum des Pan,
des Acheloos und der
Nymphen | 214. Eridanos |
| 181. Gerichtsstätte am Palladion | | 215. Ilissos |

Fig. 1: Plan of the Ilissos valley.

Notes

¹ Paus. 1.19.1–6.

² Threpsiadis – Travlos 1961; Pantelidou 1975, 113–115. 148–153; see also Marchiandi 2011.

³ Thuc. 2.15, 3–6.

⁴ Mitsos 1947; IG I3 948; see also Matthaïou 2011 and Asimakopoulou-Lintzeri et al. 2012–2013.

⁵ IG I3 257.

⁶ Bossolino – Di Giuliomaria 2015.

⁷ Is. VIII 35.

⁸ Kyriakou 2007.

⁹ Preliminary excavation reports in Threpsiadis – Travlos 1961; Travlos 1971.

¹⁰ The results will be published in the *Archeologiki Ephemeris* journal.

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Fig. 1: Travlos 1971, 291, fig. 379.

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